

On Decision of Character.

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asserting themselves in feeble vehicles, it is so much the better ; since this would authorize a hope, that if all the other grand requisites can be combined, they may form a strong character, in spite of an unadapted constitution. And on the other hand, no c^{ns}^jⁱ^aⁱ^rⁿ^s will form the true character, without those JuD^{nor}proporti[^] ; though it mjayjsn)!^

can assign no reasons but mere will, for a constancy which acts in the nature of dead weight rather than of strength ; resembling less the reaction of a powerful spring than the gravitation of a big stone.

Thgjrst prominent mental characteristic of the person whom I describe, js^,a com^leje^onfide.nce. t in... his own judgment. It will perhaps be said, that this is not so uncommon a qualification. I however think It is indeed obvious enough, that almost all men have a flattering estimate of their own understanding, and that as long as this understanding has no harder task than, to form opinions which are not to be tried in action, they have a most self-complacent assurance of being right. This assurance extends to the judgments which they pass on the proceedings of others. But let them be brought into the necessity of adopting actual measures in an untried situation, where, unassisted by any previous example or practice, they are reduced to depend on the bare resources of judgment alone, and you will see in many cases, this confidence of opinion vanish away. The mind seems all at once placed in a misty vacuity, where it reaches round on all sides, but can find nothing to take hold of. Or if not lost in vacuity, it is overwhelmed in confusion ; and feels as if its faculties were annihilated in the attempt to think of schemes and calculations among the possibilities, chances, and hazards which overspread a wide untrodden field ; and this conscious imbecility becomes severe distress, when it is believed that consequences, of serious or unknown good or evil, are depending on the decisions which are to be formed amidst so much uncertainty. The thought painfully recurs at each step and turn, I may by chance be right, but it is fully as probable I am wrong. It is like the case of a rustic walking in London, who, having no certain direction through the vast confusion of streets to the place